



# SCHOOL BUS, INC.

5100 W. 8th Street • Sioux Falls, SD 57107 • (605) 334-6644 • Fax (605) 334-4245

Steven C. Hey, President  
Jim W. Shafer, Manager

## **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION "POINT OF CONTACT"** **JUNE NEWSLETTER**

### **SD Delegates go to Warrensburg, MO for NCST Conference (Congress)**

South Dakota was represented at the 14th National Congress on School Transportation by Rick Meyer of Scotland, Ron Block of Webster, Tim Steichen of Watertown, and Val Nardini of Sioux Falls. At the Congress, which convenes every five years, delegates deliberate and adopt updates to the National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures, which comprise minimum equipment and operational standards for school buses. Hot topics at this Congress were seat belts, crossing arms, emergency exits, transportation other than to and from school, and security/emergency preparedness, to name a few. The sessions, which covered a five-day period, allowed delegates the opportunity to present and discuss issues which were of concern to them, all with the same motive of keeping our nation's children safe. Though an intense time of deliberation, this Congress gives members of our industry the opportunity to have a major voice in their own governance.

A more inclusive report will be given at the summer meeting of SDSTA to be held July 15 at 10:30 am at the Pizza Ranch in Ft. Pierre.

### **NCST has a New Name...**

The National Conference on Student Transportation from this point further will now be called the National Congress on Student Transportation.

### **National Association Presidents**

#### **Make Opening Remarks at the 14<sup>th</sup> NCST conference**

Since 1939 the National Conferences on School Transportation have been held periodically with the primary objective of ensuring safe, efficient transportation for school children. Since 1980 the 300-plus delegates from around the country who comprise the NCST have convened each five years. The 14th NCST met May 15-19, 2005, in Warrensburg Missouri on the campus of Central Missouri State University.

During the Conference, Presidents Pete Japikse (NASDPTS), Steve Kalmes (NAPT), and Dale Krapf (NSTA) addressed the delegation during its opening ceremonies.

The Presidents acknowledged the process of the Conference as being challenging, yet rewarding – indicating the objective of the group's collective efforts – as well as their own – is passenger safety.

The three Presidents backed up their comments with the following points:

- Although we do have different positions, we also have common interests
- Each of us can give up something in order for all of us to win
- You can walk away from the table a winner, even if you do not get everything you want
- Together, we are a most remarkable industry-with an incredible message for the nation. Together we are stronger, wiser, and more capable than each of us alone.

The three association presidents went on to comment on security and crash protection. The following are excerpts from their remarks ....

#### **Addressing a New Need . . . Terrorism Preparedness**

As custodians of the nation's future on a daily basis, namely 24 million of our children, all of us in the pupil transportation industry take great pride in the dedication, forethought, planning, and a great myriad of activities that we engage in on a regular basis to maximize the safety and security of our passengers.

With that responsibility comes the recognition that we have to be ever vigilant for new risks and threats so that we can study them, learn everything possible, and be proactive in our care of the children we transport. The newest issue on the table is security – specifically with respect to terrorist activities.

## **Passenger Crash Protection in Large School Buses**

The National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS), the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) and the National School Transportation Association (NSTA) take pride in providing the safest form of transportation for the nation's children, including their own. Whenever there are devices or procedures that have the potential to make pupil transportation even safer, the pupil transportation industry is at the forefront of the debate. And if a safety device or procedure proves to be beneficial, the industry stands ready to provide its support to legislators and regulators.

In that light, the three national associations have been carefully monitoring the studies involving school bus passenger crash protection.

There is an overwhelming amount of information with respect to passenger crash protection. Our concern is that individuals and groups studying these issues may not know what to focus on, or even be aware of which issues are critical.

In its report to Congress in 2002, NHTSA cautioned that "In a very good restraint system like compartmentalization in school buses, extreme caution must be taken when considering any changes to the safety equipment that have provided high protection and safety benefits to children for over 24 years. Any change in vehicle safety systems must be weighed against the benefits that could accrue and the negative benefits [effects] that could result from those changes."

The three national associations, along with all the members of the school transportation industry, support NHTSA's research and will continue to work with all available and viable resources to provide the safest form of transportation for all of our Nation's children as they participate in educational programs.

## **School Bus Recalls**

### **IC Corporation AmTran FE**

Years: 2000-2003 - Mfg. 5/99 - 3/03

Recall # 03V195/IC. Certain school buses fail to comply with the emergency exit requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 217, "Bus Emergency Exits and Window Retention and Release." During an emergency situation, this condition could prevent passengers from exiting the bus, which could cause personal injury or death.

## **Head Start Reauthorization Legislation Moves Through House Committee**

The House Education and the Workforce Committee approved legislation reauthorizing Head Start this week. The<sup>th</sup> reauthorization has been stalled for more than two years. Legislation which passed the House by one vote in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress was controversial as it contained a pilot program proposed by the White House which would have allowed eight states to take over their local Head Start centers. Opponents to the provision feared it would essentially turn the program into a block grant without Federal standards. The current legislation moving through the House does not contain this provision. The bill does, however, include provisions requiring operators to establish a local governance board to monitor all program activities; work with the local school districts to ensure that children entering kindergarten are well prepared for academic work; and align curricula with state academic standards.

Legislators changed the focus of the bill following tales of financial irregularities and abuse in local programs. A subsequent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the program found that 76 percent of local Head Start operators surveyed in 2000 had some form of financial irregularity.

The bill is expected to be tougher to pass the House Floor as Committee Chairman John Boehner (R-OH) is expected to attach religious preference in hiring language to the bill. Most Democrats oppose the provision saying it would lead to religious discrimination with the use of Federal funds.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee is still writing its Head Start legislation.

## **Legislation Requiring Seat Belts on School Buses Introduced in Congress**

Congressman Joe Baca (D-CA) recently introduced legislation requiring seat belts on school buses. Co-sponsors of the bill include Congressmen Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO) and Sherrod Brown (D-OH).

The Save Every Child Using Restraints Act of 2005 (SECURE Act) directs the Secretary of Transportation to issue regulations establishing a safety standard requiring that school buses with a gross vehicle weight of more than 10,000 pounds be equipped with 3-point safety belts on all seats.

The Secretary is directed to consider the compatibility of 3-point safety belts on seats designed according to compartmentalization. The Secretary is also directed to establish an elementary and secondary school traffic safety program, including providing education on the use and misuse of 3-point safety belts on all school buses.

The bill has been referred to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

## Train the Trainer Class

Keep in mind the Train the Trainer dates are July 21<sup>st</sup> in Pierre, July 26<sup>th</sup> in Sioux Falls & July 28<sup>th</sup> in Rapid City. Contact Jim Shafer at School Bus, Inc. if you need to register or you need more information.

The information in this newsletter is distributed for information purposes only. It does not represent legal advice.